

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9912

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, PK

SUBJ: BHUTTO CONCLUDES BALUCHISTAN TOUR BY ABOLISHING
FEUDAL SARDARI SYSTEM

REF: A) KARACHI 18 B) KARACHI 1461

SUMMARY: BHUTTO CONCLUDED AN UNPRECEDENTED TWO-WEEK
TOUR OF BALUCHISTAN APRIL 8 WITH A MUCH-PUBLICIZED SPEECH
PROCLAIMING THE LEGAL DEMISE OF THE FUEDAL/TRIBAL SARDARI
SYSTEM. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY WELCOMED A FEW REPENTANT
GUERRILLAS DOWN FROM THE HILL, CELEBRATED THE
ADHERENCE OF SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS TO HIS RULING PAKISTAN
PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP), AND PRESIDED AT THREE VOLUBLE
DIVISIONAL PPP CONVENTIONS. IN QUETTA, BHUTTO REITERATED
HIS STAND ON RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN (REF B) AND
SPENT A DAY STRENGTHENING HIS TIES WITH MILITARY OFFICERS.
HE HELD A CABINET MEETING THERE AS WELL. SPEAKING TO THE
MILITARY APRIL 7, HE ARGUED THAT A WELL-ARMED BUT
UNAGGRESSIVE PAKISTAN ENHANCED REGIONAL STABILITY. MOST
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KARACHI OBSERVERS CONCLUDED THAT BHUTTO'S TIME IN

BALUCHISTAN HAD BEEN WELL SPENT, BUT THAT THE TACTICAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS OCCASIONED BY THE EARLIER DISMISSAL OF THE PROVINCIAL PPP MINISTRY (REF A) REMAINED UNRESOLVED. END SUMMARY

1. SARDARI SYSTEM ABOLISHED: PRIME MINISTER AND PPP CHAIRMAN ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO, CONCLUDING AN UNPRECEDENTEDLY-LONG TWO-WEEK TOUR OF VAST, SPARSELY-POPULATED BALUCHISTAN, ANNOUNCED IN QUETTA APRIL 8 THAT THE FEUDAL/TRIBAL SARDARI SYSTEM HAD BEEN ABOLISHED THROUGHOUT PAKISTAN. SPEAKING TO A LARGE CROWD "UNDER CLOUDBURST AND IN ALMOST DRAMATIC SETTING" (KARACHI ""MORING NEWS"), BHUTTO PROCLAIMED THE LEGAL DEMISE OF A SYSTEM OF INDIRECT, HEREDITARY TRIBAL RULE WHICH HAD DATED FROM MOGHUL TIMES AND HAD BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THE BRITISH. BHUTTO ROUNDLY DENOUNCED THE OPPOSITION NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY (NAP) COALITION PROVINCIAL MINISTRY, WHICH HE HAD DISMISSED IN FEBRUARY 1973, AS SARDAR-DOMINATED. THE NAP-LED PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY HAD PASSED ONLY A NON-BINDING RESOLUTION AGAINST THE SARDARI SYSTEM, BUT HAD NOT LEGISLATED IT OUT OF EXISTENCE, HE NOTED. HE ADDED THAT THE NAP SARDARS HAD SOUGHT "AZAD (FREE) BALUCHISTAN" BUT THEIR DESIGNS HAD BEEN FRUSTRATED BY HIM. BHUTTO URGED THOSE WHO STILL SUPPORTED THE SARDARI SYSTEM TO GO TO AFGHANISTAN OR INDIA -- THERE WERE SARDARS IN THE FIRST AND "SARDARJIS" IN THE SECOND. THE LEGAL ABOLITION OF THE SARDARI SYSTEM WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY A PRESIDENTIAL ORDINANCE PROMULGATED FROM ISLAMABAD APRIL 8. TO MARK THIS STEP FORWARD, APRIL 9 WAS PROCLAIMED A PUBLIC HOLIDAY THROUGHOUT PAKISTAN.

2. GUERRILLAS AND CONVERTS: DURING BHUTTO'S STOPOVERS AT SIBI, KALAT, KHUZDAR, AND QUETTA, HE REPORTEDLY RECEIVED SMALL GROUPS OF PRO-NAP GUERRILLAS WHO HAD DECIDED TO GIVE THEMSELVES UP. THEY UNIFORMLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT THEY HAD BEEN MISLED BY THEIR SARDARS BUT AT LAST HAD REALIZED THAT BHUTTO, THE ARMY, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN WERE WORKING FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANCE OF BALUCHISTAN BY BUILDING ROADS, SCHOOLS, AND HOSPITALS. ALTHOUGH NO MAJOR LEADERS SURRENDERED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BHUTTO, IN THE PREVIOUS THREE MONTHS SUCH IMPORTANT YOUNGER GUERRILLAS AS SULEIMAN BALUCH (THE GOVERNOR'S NEPHEW), MUNIR MENGAL (SON OF IMPRISONED NAP EX-CHIEF MINISTER ATTAULLAH MENGAL, AND KHAIR JAN BIZENJO BALUCH (A LEADING PRO-NAP PROPAGANDIST) HAD COME DOWN FROM THE HILLS. THE GOVERNOR AND HIS SONS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ARRANGING THESE SURRENDERS.

3. SEVERAL NOTEWORTHY OPPOSITION LEADERS TIMED THEIR CONVERSION TO THE PPP TO COINCIDE WITH BHUTTO'S TOUR; WRITING IN THE "PAKISTAN TIMES", H.K. BURKI NOTED THAT "THE SARDARS ARE FALLING OVER ONE ANOTHER TO JOIN THE PEOPLE'S PARTY". PROMINENT AMONG THEM WERE NABI BUKHSH KHOSO, FORMERLY PRESIDENT OF THE SIBI DISTRICT NAP; MIR CHAKAR KHAN DOMKI, ELECTED A NAP MEMBER OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, AND INDEPENDENT SENATOR MIR HAZAR BAKHSH DOMKI, SONS-IN-LAW OF INDEPENDENT SARDAR AKBAR KHAN BUGTI; AND MANY LESSER LEADERS OF THE LARGE AND BACKWARD MENGAL, MARRI, AND BUGTI TRIBES. MAULVI HASSAN SHAH, A PATHAN MEMBER OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, FORMER MINISTER IN THE NAPA AND PPP-DOMINATED CABINETS, AND LONGTIME LEADER OF THE JUI RELIGIOUS PARTY, ALSO ANNOUNCED HIS CONVERSION TO THE PPP.

4. CONVENTIONS: CONCLUDING A SERIES OF PPP CONVENTIONS WHICH HAS TAKEN HIM TO EVERY DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS TOWN IN PAKISTAN'S FOUR PROVINCES, BHUTTO PRESIDED OVER GATHERINGS OF THE PARTY FAITHFUL AT SIBI, KHUZDAR (NEAR KALAT), AND QUETTA IN LATE MARCH AND EARLY APRIL. EACH CONVENTION LASTED TWO DAYS, THE SESSIONS CONTINUING FOR UP TO TEN HOURS WITHOUT A TEA BREAK. BHUTTO AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS SAT ON THE DAIS AS PARTY WORKERS PRAISED HIM AND ATTACKED THEM. JAM MIR GHULAM QADIR KHAN, EARLIER DISMISSED AS PPP CHIEF MINISTER (REF A), WAS REPEATEDLY DENOUNCED AS CORRUPT AND INEFFECTIVE; BHUTTO DEFENDED HIM WITHOUT MUCH SPIRIT. IN REPLYING TO THE CONVENTION DEBATES, BHUTTO STRESSED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN BALUCHISTAN RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT, SAFEGUARDED ITS AUTONOMY, DEVELOPED ITS ECONOMY, AND DEFEATED THE DESIGNS OF THE TRAITOROUS NAP SARDARS. SPEAKING AT QUETTA APRIL 3, BHUTTO SUPRISINGLY URGED WOMEN TO SHED THEIR VEILS AND PLAY A GREATER ROLE

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IN POLITICS. HE ALSO USED THE QUETTA PARTY PLATFORM TO RESTATE, IN LESS THAN CONCILIATORY TERMS, HIS WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH AFGHANISTAN'S REPRESENTATIVES (REF B).

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5. PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL SECURITY: BHUTTO MET IN QUETTA APRIL 6 WITH THE GOVERNOR, FEDERAL MINISTERS PIRZADA (EDUCATION-PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATION), RAZA (PRODUCTION), HANIF (FINANCE), KHATTAK (FUEL, POWER, AND RESOURCES), JAMALI (LABOR, HEALTH, POPULATION), AZIZ AHMED (MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE), AND ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL ZIA-UL HAQ. BHUTTO REPORTEDLY SUMMARIZED HIS TOUR IMPRESSIONS, FOUND THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IMPROVED, AND ISSUED ORDERS FOR MORE RAPID AND LESS CORRUPTION-RIDDEN EFFORTS TOWARD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. ON APRIL 7, BHUTTO SPOKE AT THE INAUGURATION OF A NEW BUILDING AT THE STORIED, 70-YEAR-OLD COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, QUETTA. ADDRESSING A MILITARY AUDIENCE, INCLUDING A FEW OFFICERS FROM "FRIENDLY COUNTRIES", DEFENSE MINISTER BHUTTO REGRETTED THAT POOR COUNTRIES LIKE PAKISTAN HAD TO DEVOTE SO MUCH OF THEIR MEAGER RESOURCES TO DEFENSE. HOWEVER, HE ARGUED, PAKISTAN MUST HAVE PARITY OF ARMAMENTS LEST IMBALANCE LEAD TO "SHARPENED CONFRONTATION, INCREASED TENSION, AND THE TRIGGER". HE PRAISED THE OFFICERS

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AND PLEDGED THAT PAKISTAN'S ARMED FORCES WOULD BE MODERNIZED. BHUTTO REITERATED THAT PAKISTAN WELCOMED GOOD RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS "ON PRINCIPLES OF SOVEREIGN EQUALITY OF STATES -- FREE FROM DOMINANCE AND HEGEMONY". SPEAKING INFORMALLY AT A DINNER IN HIS HONOR GIVEN BY THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF THAT EVENING,

BHUTTO CALLED FOR AN "EQUITABLE EQUILIBRIUM" OF POWER IN THE REGION. HE NOTED THAT INDIA DISCUSSED ITS SECURITY IN BROAD TERMS, CITING THREATS FROM CHINA AS WELL AS PAKISTAN AND INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN INCLUDING DIEGO GARCIA; SIMILARLY, PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC POSITION SHOULD BE SEEN AS A "WHOLE PICTURE" INCLUDING A NEIGHBORING SUPER-POWER, A GREAT POWER, AND THE VITAL MIDDLE EAST WITH ITS OIL, AS WELL AS INDIA. CONTRADICTING THE INDIAN DEFENCE MINISTER, BHUTTO STATED, "WE ARE NOT ARMING OURSELVES FOR AGGRESSION. WE WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE". HE AGAIN PRAISED THE OFFICERS AND MEN AND PLEDGED THAT PAKISTAN'S SOVEREIGNTY WOULD BE DEFENDED COME WHAT MAY.

6. COMMENT: KARACHI OBSERVERS GENERALLY CONCLUDED THAT BHUTTO'S BALUCHISTAN TOUR, THE LONGEST UNDERTAKEN IN LIVING MEMORY BY A PAKISTANI HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, HAD STRENGTHENED HIS POSITION. ARMY ACTION -- AS WELL AS FEDERAL LARGESSE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROBABILITY OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS -- IS USUALLY CREDITED WITH HELPING TO BRING THE DISSIDENTS FROM THE HILLS AND THE SARDARS INTO THE PPP. THE PPP CONVENTIONS GAVE THE WORKERS A SALUTARY CHANCE TO AIR THEIR GRIEVANCES, ESPECIALLY AGAINST THE SARDARI SYSTEM, BUT APPARENTLY DID NOT PRODUCE A CONSENSUS ON THE RESTORATION OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN BALUCHISTAN. THE PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL EXTEND GOVERNOR'S RULE UNTIL THE END OF JUNE, THE MAXIMUM (SIX-MONTH) PERIOD PERMITTED. THE TACTICAL POLITICAL MANEUVERING IN QUETTA WILL THUS CONTINUE UNABATED. BHUTTO'S POLITICAL STRATEGY -- THE ARMY PRESENCE, APPROPRIATIONS FOR POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE IMPRISONED BALUCHI NAP LEADERS -- APPEARS UNCHANGED.

7. THE OVER-PUBLICIZED ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE LEGAL DEMISE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE SARDARI SYSTEM EVOKED SKEPTICAL SMILES IN KARACHI. OBSERVERS WITH LONG MEMORIES POINTED OUT THAT SARDARS' JUDICIAL POWERS OVER THEIR TRIBESMEN HAD BEEN ASSUMED BY BUREAUCRATS IN RECENT YEARS, THE EXACTION OF "SHISKAK" (ONE-SIXTH OF THE CROP) BY THE SARDARS HAD LONG BEEN ILLEGAL, AND THAT "BEGAR" (THE BALUCHI EQUIVALENT OF THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FRENCH "CORVEE") WAS LIKEWISE OUTLAWED. THEY NOTED THAT THE NAP-DOMINATED ASSEMBLY HAD DONE NO MORE THAN PASS A RESOLUTION AGAINST THE SARDARI SYSTEM BECAUSE IT WAS A FEDERAL SUBJECT, WHICH FACT THE PROMULGATION OF THE EQUIVOCALLY-WORDED PRESIDENTIAL ORDINANCE TACTTLY CONFORMED. FINALLY, THEY NOTED, LEGISLATION IS MEANINGLESS WITHOUT ENFORCEMENT -- AND THERE ARE NOW

MORE SARDARS IN THE PPP THAN IN THE OPPOSITION.

MOORE

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